

Your Own Saint Joseph



by Father Joseph Casper Husslein

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Our Glorious Saint Joseph

Saints know thee best, oh hidden, silent Saint!

And would that I could feel a little part
Of that great love Teresa's kindred heart
Felt for thee Foster-father!

- *Father Matthew Russell, S.J.*

We often hear it said that little is known about Saint Joseph. True as that statement may appear we shall find, upon closer study of the Scriptures, that in the little known to us very much is contained. The saints and the simple of heart can understand Saint Joseph. And who, among all the servants of God, after, our own Blessed Mother, is more familiar to the Faithful throughout the world than Joseph, her pure Spouse, the Foster-father of the world's Redeemer?



The life of Saint Joseph was made known to us, purely and entirely, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, Our only source of information is the infallible Scripture. Here we behold the Saint in all his simplicity and greatness:, a man equally humble and exalted, gentle and strong, hidden and glorious.

The Scripture words that speak of Joseph are like the ocean in depth and like the firmament that still recedes beyond our ken. The more we search, the more we find.

There are "apocryphal" writings also that deal with the life of Saint Joseph, but the Church has never accepted them. Some of the statements contained in these may be based

upon tradition, but no reliance can be placed on their historic truth. Considered as religious documents they are void of authority, and often, as Saint Jerome says, the merest dreams. Some, however, stripped of their exaggerations, are not without a legendary beauty. Such is the familiar story of the flowering rod of Saint Joseph.

This has served as an inspiration for some of the world's greatest painters. Eleanor C. Donnelly, in her "Legend of Saint Joseph's Staff," summons up a picture of Our Lady's suitors gathered in the golden porches of Judah's Temple. To each a rod is given by the silvery-haired high priest. "O flower of God, burst from his rod," he silently prays, "who Mary's spouse shall be!" And there, at his word, the dry staff in Joseph's hand begins to burgeon and to bloom:

Till graceful, bell-shaped lilies,
Strange to Jerusalem,
Crown with their clinging clusters
The long green leafless stem.

Kneeling the youths salute it,
The token sent of God,
As Israel's princes yielded
Homage to Aaron's rod.

And Mary, veiled and trembling,
Hears through the silent house:
"Hail, flowering staff of Joseph;
All hail, the Virgin's Spouse!"

Fra Angelico, Luini, Raphael and many other artists depict Saint Joseph as a noble, gracious man, in the full strength of manhood. Such we know he must have been to endure the labors and hardship which Providence ' destined him to endure for Mary and the Divine Child. The false conception

that Saint Joseph was already in his declining years at the time of his Espousals has been traced back to "apocryphal" sources.

On the other hand, there is a poetic truth in the blossoming rod of Joseph. Its graceful lilies, white as virgin snow, have become for us an exquisite symbol of Joseph's inviolate chastity; while the miracle, conceived as singling him out for Mary's Spouse from among all the noble suitors, leaves us to ponder on the stupendous choice made by Almighty God in selecting Joseph to entrust to him the Incarnate Word and His immaculate Virgin Mother.

Of the character of Joseph we know that he was a "just man," and thus fit to be the Spouse of her who was declared by the Angel "full of grace." To be just implies a complete fulfillment of all the Divine laws. Abraham, it has been said, was called the faithful; David, the pious; Daniel, the wise; Moses, the meekest of men; but Joseph combines all these qualities and possesses all virtues in their perfection.

The same title that is applied to Joseph is used also in reference to Our Divine Lord. He is called in the Holy Scriptures: "The holy one and the just, the author of life." If nothing more were known by us concerning the virtues of Saint Joseph than that canonization by the Holy Ghost, "a just man," enough would therefore have been told us.

Of the royal ancestry of Joseph we are informed by the words of the Angel who solemnly addresses him: "Joseph, son of David." To Ezechiel, fallen upon his face, the angelic summons was: "Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak to thee." To Saint Peter the Angel simply said: "Arise quickly." And to John the great voice as of a trumpet shouted: "What thou seest, write in a book." Little heed does the Angel give to name or title. But not so in the case of

Joseph, for he is addressed by the heavenly messenger as a prince royal of the people of God, with the noblest title that any man then living could possibly have borne: "Son of David."

Yet it was not the royal blood in Joseph's veins that the Angel respected, but the Divine promise of the Messias, which as the Prophecies made clear, was connected with the royal House of David. Joseph was called to be the witness of the ultimate fulfillment of that promise. He was to be the guardian of the mysteries contained in it. He was himself to stand in the most intimate relation to the Saviour that would be born, the long and ardently desired of His people Israel.

What was the ancient crown of Babylon, the royal asp upon the forehead of a Pharaoh, the golden scepter in the hand of an Augustus, or any other emblem of human sovereignty and power compared with the white lily of Saint Joseph, the emblem of his virginal espousal to Mary and of his chaste guardianship of Christ? Long ago the Prophecy had predicted that the Messias should not come until the scepter had passed from Judah and there would be no longer a ruler of David's line. Only then was He to appear, "that is to be sent, and he shall be the expectation of the nations." (Genesis 49:10) Now, therefore, when the glory of royalty had disappeared the prophecies were at last to be fulfilled, and to Joseph, "Son of David," would be born by Mary, his espoused wife, the Saviour of the world, conceived by her most purely of the Holy Ghost. He should be called, as the angel had foretold: "the son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father, and he shall reign in the house of Jacob forever. And of his Kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke 1:32,33)

The name "Joseph" itself - in Hebrew *Yosef* - is interpreted to mean "may God add." The idea of "Increase" is intimately

connected with it.' Thus the Egyptian Joseph is described in Holy Scripture as a fruitful tree that grows by a fountain, and whose branches - "daughters" of the parent stem, as the Hebrew text delightfully calls them - stretch far and wide over the garden wall. (Genesis 49:22)

By a special Providence, then, was this name given to him who was to be the husband of Mary and whose virginal marriage God crowned with a virginal paternity, as Foster-father of the Saviour of the world. In all things Joseph succeeded, in all things he prospered, not in amassing the treasures of earth, but the graces and glories of Heaven.

Fourteen times in the Holy Scriptures he 'is called by his name of "Joseph." Seven times the name is mentioned by Saint Matthew, five times by Saint Luke, and twice by Saint John. Saint Mark begins with the preaching of John the Baptist, and so at once proceeds to the public coming of Our Lord, but he finds occasion to point to Joseph in an allusion to Christ's lowly upbringing in the carpenter shop of Nazareth: "Is not this the carpenter?"

Here, then, is another detail of Saint Joseph's life which the sacred writers are at special pains to record. Joseph was a carpenter and in that same trade Christ also took part. "Is not this the carpenter's son?" the town folk of Jesus asked. And again we hear them say: "Is not this the carpenter?" The Greek text leaves no doubt that such is the exact translation. The Saviour of the world, we know then, was reared in the carpenter's home and played in the carpenter's shop, where in maturer years he partook of the carpenter's toil. And here, too, Mary loved and labored at the side of these two beings most dear to her, her virginal spouse and the Incarnate God, her own true Son, who in his sweet-and winning way would call Saint Joseph, "Father!"

And the Child grew in wisdom's ken
And years and grace with God and men;
And in His father's humble art
Took share and part.

"With toil," saith He, "My limbs are wet
Prefiguring the Bloody Sweat":
Ah! how He bears our chastisement
With sweet content!

At Joseph's bench, at Jesus' side,
The Mother sits, the Virgin-Bride;
Happy if she may cheer their hearts
With loving arts.

O Blessed Three! who felt the sting
Of want and toil and suffering,
Pity the needy and obscure
Lot of the poor.

Banish the "pride of life" from all
Whom ampler wealth and joys befall:
Be every heart with love repaid
That seeks your aid.

So sang Pope Leo XIII of that sublimest of all workingmen's
families, where by the labor of His own hands the greatest of
all the sons of David ennobled human toil. Rejecting
Solomon's crown and scepter, He chose instead, with loving
predilection, the Carpenter Joseph's humble tools: saw and
rule and hammer - fitting well into His hands who was the
Builder of the universe.

The Saint of the Incarnation

Saint Joseph, it has been truly said, belongs to the Hierarchy of the Incarnation. With Mary he is drawn closer than any other creature into that inner circle the center of which is the God-Man. Mary and Joseph are beautifully symbolized by the two golden cherubim, one on the right and the other on the left of the Mercy Seat to which God descended in the Old Law. The wings of the two cherubim were outstretched over the Ark of the Covenant, and they faced one towards the other, and both towards the Oracle of God between them. So by Divine predilection were Mary and Joseph chosen to be most intimately devoted to each other and mutually to cherish between them the Incarnate Word, Emmanuel, "God with us."

Neither patriarch nor prophet, neither apostle nor martyr, not even the Precursor of Christ could be said to belong to that inmost Holy of Holies where Mary and Joseph, higher in dignity than the highest cherubim, humbly worshipped the Divinity that dwelled with them in human form. To them it was given to carry in their arms the God-Man, to nourish and clothe Him, to protect and guard His human existence.

But together they approach still more closely the mysteries of the Word-made-flesh. While Mary is the Virginal Mother of Christ, and so incomparably above all other created beings, Saint Joseph may truly be described as the virginal father. It is by the Holy Ghost Himself that Joseph is given the name of "father" in the Sacred Scriptures. At the same time it is made plain beyond all doubt that he is not the physical, but the true moral father of the Saviour as he was his legal father also in the eyes of the law. Only when the Jews, not knowing of the mystery of the Incarnation, take Joseph for

the natural father of Jesus, is the qualification added: "being, as it was supposed, the son of Joseph." Elsewhere Mary and Joseph are simply described as the "parents" of Jesus, since from all that the Sacred writers have previously narrated concerning the virginal conception of Christ no one could possibly misunderstand the meaning of this word as applied to Joseph.

"Joseph," says the great Jesuit theologian Suarez, "is father not merely in name but in reality, since he possesses everything belonging to fatherhood that man can possess without violating virginity." In that virginity consists the great glory of Joseph's true paternity.

There is no fatherhood on earth to compare in greatness, in beauty* in dignity, in sanctity with that of Saint Joseph. The Fathers and Doctors of the Church, with profound insight into the works of God, extol in highest terms this wonderful paternity of Joseph. Christ, as the true Child of Mary by the Holy Ghost, formed by God alone out of her immaculate substance, could not but belong to Joseph, also, because virginally given to him within the bonds of holy wedlock. Mary and Joseph "belonged no longer to themselves but to each other, as truest husband and wife, and so Mary's Son belonged with her to Joseph.

Considering merely the human nature of Christ, Joseph therefore had the full paternal right as well as the duty to command, care for and protect the Divine Child entrusted to him. That was his vocation. His fatherhood was the more sublime in that it was purely virginal. It differed entirely, as Saint Augustine is so careful to explain, from any mere fatherhood by adoption from outside the marriage bond. Joseph, says the great Doctor of the Church, is father of Jesus, "in the same way that he is understood to be husband of Mary," namely virginally and through holy marriage.

This may enable us to understand something at least of the dignity conferred on Saint Joseph, the full greatness of which we cannot possibly comprehend. To do so would imply that we could fully comprehend the Eternal God who so intimately made Himself dependent upon Saint Joseph in the human nature He assumed. More intimate indeed was this relation than we have yet said, and more impossible than we perhaps have ever yet conceived will it ever be for us to pay the debt we owe to Joseph.

Saint Joseph's marriage with Mary, as Saint Thomas says, was ordained by God to this special purpose, that the Divine Child might be begotten and reared within it. According to the Divine councils the Saviour was to be born not merely of a virgin, but of an espoused virgin. Now by Joseph's consent did both these conditions come to pass. Not only did he give his hand to Mary, but he freely gave her also the inviolate gift of her virginity, and this he did by sacredly pledging his own virginal chastity to her. It was God who had inspired this vow in both their hearts. So from that garden enclosed, that fountain sealed, divinely entrusted and sacredly belonging to Joseph, the mystery of the Incarnation could come to pass according to all the Divine designs.

Wonderful, therefore, and most intimate was Joseph's relation to the Divine mystery of the Incarnation, but unspeakable, too, were the sufferings and trials, no less than the joys and glories it was to bring to him. By the martyrdom of his soul he was to participate according to his own measure in the passion of the Saviour.

The first great trial came to him in Mary's regard, before the mystery of the Incarnation had yet been revealed to him by God's own angel messenger. God permitted this suffering, and it was not for Mary, greatly though her own heart bled, to reveal without Divine sanction the secrets of the King. But

out of the darkness of this trial, exceeding all martyrdoms by rack and rope, there shone out Joseph's heroic charity for Mary, his complete unselfishness and the profoundest respect he ever entertained for even the least of the sanctities of the law. That here as elsewhere he showed himself "a just man," was the supreme praise given him by the Holy Ghost.

To give him full assurance of his own paternal rights over the Divine Child that should be born to him by Mary, of the Holy Ghost, he was further given the commission: "And thou shalt call his name Jesus." The assigning of a name among the Jews was a strictly parental prerogative. The same words had already been spoken to Mary. To both, therefore, now belonged the full parental authority over Jesus, and both together are in the Scriptures called the "parents" of Jesus. To both the Divine Saviour gave His complete and perfect subjection - yet first of all to Joseph, who, as head of the Holy Family, was for both Christ and Mary the "shadow of the Eternal Father," His visible representative on earth.

That Joseph, like Mary, practiced perpetual virginity no Catholic would doubt. When the Sacred Scriptures refer to the "brothers" and "sisters" of Jesus it is only because the Hebrew idiom includes all near relatives under these terms. In fact, there is no Hebrew word to express the idea of "cousins." That term might probably have expressed exactly the particular sense in which these words are meant here. The keen appreciation of tribal connection, moreover, made it natural for the Jews to express themselves in such a way. The fact indeed that Christ committed his mother to John should make it plain that with the death of the Saviour she was now left alone, although henceforth she would be the Mother of all the Faithful, who together constitute that mystic body whereof Christ is the Head.

Important, too, is the part Saint Joseph plays in the mystery of the Nativity. The journey with Mary to Bethlehem, the vain search for an inn to shelter his youthful Virgin wife, the desolate stable at last chosen by him as the night is falling, the birth there of the Christ Child, and finally the first sublime adoration at the Crib, when Mary and Joseph knelt absorbed in profoundest worship of that Child who was their very God - these are scenes we have often dwelled upon in thoughts too deep for tears!

And then to think that henceforth this Child was to be all their own: to fondle, care for and to nourish, that so, for the world's salvation, He might be sacrificed at last on the rough, hard wood of the Cross - that wood harder still than the bare trough of the manger which loving hands gently filled for Him with the straw of the stable!

So we might continue with mystery after mystery. First there would pass before us the mystery of the painful Circumcision when the first drops of Christ's blood were shed and, together, Joseph and Mary gave His sacred name to the Saviour of the world, "Jesus," that name at whose mention every knee must bow in heaven, on earth and under the earth. Then would follow the solemn Presentation when Joseph with Mary brought their Child into the Temple to offer Him to the Lord, and their hearts were pierced, while the glory, also, of the Saviour was revealed to them. For this Child was to be for the fall and resurrection of many. It was there that Joseph and Mary together made to God the oblation of the Divine Victim of Calvary, and so entered into closest relation with the great work of man's Redemption.

Who knows what depths of insight into Christ's sacred Passion may have been granted Joseph while pondering over the prophecies of the Messias, and how close he may have stood to the Cross of Christ - closer we may well believe than

any other save Mary alone! What soul, after Mary's, was so filled with grace and light as his to whom the angels bore God's messages? Vast was his compassion!

Surely, too, Joseph had intimate part in the wonderful Epiphany, Christ's manifestation to the Gentiles led by the star from the East. Their calling was our own vocation, and they were the representatives at the Saviour's birth for all the races not sprung from the seed of Abraham. Joseph's part in this great mystery, so significant for the Gentile world, may be more clear if we remember that he is regarded as the first Christian missionary to heathen lands, since he bore into pagan Egypt the Christ Child and His Mother. '

Of special importance here is the story of the three days' loss and the finding of Christ in Jerusalem where He had remained behind "and his parents knew it not." Here in truth was another and unbloody Golgotha where the soul of Joseph participated in the Passion of Christ. But most important for our subject are the words of Mary herself, when with Joseph she found her Son in the Temple:

And seeing him they wondered. And his mother said to him: "Son, why hast thou done so to us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. - Luke ii. 48.

"Thy father!" That is the word which in the moment of tender and loving emotion, leaps to her lips without any premeditation. "Thy father" - it is evidently the name Mary used in speaking of Joseph to her Divine Son. "Thy father and I!" There in a flash is revealed to us the whole home life of that "Earthly Trinity!" And it is Joseph, too, who first comes to Mary's mind. She is accustomed to think of him first, and does so now even though her own heart too has just passed with him through a living martyrdom.

And then, once more, listen to the name by which the Incarnate Word is called in that holy Family: "Son!" That was obviously the title by which Joseph, like Mary, called the Divine Saviour, "Son, why has thou done so to us?" There was One Other only who might call Him by that title and He was the Eternal Father, whose authority Joseph represented.

Once only, and that during this incident of His stay in the Temple, did Christ apparently disregard the paternal right of Joseph. It was because the will and call of His Eternal Father had to take precedence over every human tie. From God alone is all authority, even that of parents, derived. And the great object of Divine Providence was here to teach both parents and children the supreme lesson of Vocation: that God's right is first and foremost, and blessed they who understand this truth and joyfully apply it in their own regard!

Parents indeed have good reason to rejoice when God deigns to call their sons and daughters to His sublime service, He will more than sustain them in their happy sacrifice, great though this may often be. By the perfection of their holocaust parents and children both may look forward to God's greatest blessings, His hundredfold, even 'here upon earth.

But with the lesson of Vocation taught, Jesus freely and entirely submitted Himself to the authority of His "parents," to be subject to them even to the death of Joseph and to His public ministry. "And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them."

Of that home life in Nazareth a beautiful description is given us from no less a pen than that of Pope Leo XIII. It was composed for the Lauds of the Office of the Holy Family and translated by Mgr. Hugh T. Henry:

O House of Nazareth the blest,
Fair hostess of the Lord,
The Church was nurtured at thy breast
And shared thy scanty board.

In all the spreading lands of earth
The wandering sun may see
No dearer spot, no ampler worth
Than erst was found in thee!

We know thy humble tenement
Was heaven's hermitage:
Celestial heralds came and went
In endless embassy.

There, whatsoever Joseph asks
Christ hastens to fulfill:
While Mary loves the household tasks
That wait her joyous will.

There Joseph toileth at her side
Her joys and griefs to share,
With thousand ties knit to his bride,
Of love and work and prayer.

Yet how their bosoms constant burn
And deeper ardors prove
In love of Christ, whose eyes return
Tokens of mutual love.

O, then, in all the homes of earth,
Be love the bond of life:
May it enthrone at every hearth
The peace that husheth strife.

By the side of these noble and dignified verses, incorporated
in the liturgy of the Church, let us place another poem

written in a fighter and more playful vein. It is by Katherine Tynan, and entitled, "The Man of the House":

Joseph, honored from sea to sea,
This is your name that pleases me,
"Man of the House"

I see you rise at the dawn and light
The fire and blow till the flame is bright.

I see you take the pitcher and carry
The deep well water for Jesus and Mary.

You knead the corn for the bread so fine,
Gather them grapes from the hanging vine.

There are little feet that are soft and slow,
Follow you whithersoever you go.

There's a little face at your workshop door,
A little one sits down on your floor:

Holds His hands for the shavings curled,
The soft little hands that have made the world.

Mary calls you: the meal is ready:
You swing the Child to your shoulder steady.

I see your quiet smile as you sit
And watch the little Son thrive and eat.

The vine curls by the window space,
The wings of angels cover the face.

Up in the rafters, polished and olden,
There's a Dove that broods and his wings are golden.

You who kept Them through shine and storm,
A staff, a shelter kindly and warm.

Father of Jesus, husband of Mary,
Hold us your lilies for sanctuary!

Joseph, honored from sea to-sea,
Guard me mine and my own roof-tree.
"Man of the House."

Prefigured in the Old Law

While directly mentioned in the New Testament, Saint Joseph is hardly less clearly foreshadowed in the Old. Many types and figures are pointed to, such as Abraham and Moses, yet the Church herself in her Divine Office dwells most insistently upon the similarity between the Egyptian Joseph and the Foster-father of Our Lord. Constantly, and with most happy effect, she applies to the Spouse of Mary the Scripture words spoken of him whom Pharoah so gloriously exalted. Well, therefore, could Pope Leo XIII say that we may with full right claim to see in the earlier Joseph the "express image" of the later and greater Patriarch.

It is a fact that under certain aspects Christ also is prefigured by the Egyptian Joseph, in whom we certainly behold one of the most beautiful, attractive and lovable figures of the Old Testament. But the truth of that further and more minute parallel which the Church so insistently draws between the two great Patriarchs, who both providentially came into the pagan land of Egypt and both arrived there through the cruel injustice of man, and both brought with them a blessing for that land of idols, and the world is nowise affected by this fact.

Naturally, it is to the chastity of the Egyptian Joseph that our thoughts will first revert. In this he stands forth as a beautiful type of the angelic purity of our own Saint Joseph, a purity such as never was required of any other mortal man. For Joseph was to be the virgin Spouse of the immaculate Mother of Christ and the virginal Guardian of the immaculate Lamb of God. He was to be the "shadow" of the Eternal Father, and visibly to hold the place of Mary's invisible Spouse, the Holy Ghost;

More than the Egyptian Joseph, he was entrusted with the greatest treasures earth has ever known and was given complete management of that household of which God Himself was a member. More than his Egyptian namesake, too, was he supremely successful in all things, serving most perfectly His Divine Master, who at the same time was his least and humblest subject. Well, therefore, does the Church quote in reference to Saint Joseph those words of the Old Testament:

And Joseph found favor in the sight of his master, and ministered to him: and being set over all by him, he governed the house committed to him, and all things that were delivered to him. - *Genesis 39:4*

Not only was the house of Putiphar blessed for the sake of Joseph and all his substance increased, for "the Lord was with him, and he was a prosperous man in all things," but in time to come the whole kingdom of Pharaoh himself was to be entrusted to Joseph, even as the universal Church has been placed under the patronage of our great Saint. Again the Church herself, with supreme fitness, applies to him here the words of Pharaoh:

Can we find such another man, that is full of the spirit of God? Seeing God has shown thee all that thou has said, can I find one wiser and one like unto thee? Thou shalt be over my house. Behold, I have appointed thee over the whole land of Egypt. - *Genesis 41:38-41*

At the command of his mouth all people were to obey. Only in his kingly throne would Pharaoh remain above him, but all Egypt was to be subject to him. And Pharaoh took the ring from his hand and gave it to Joseph, - and he put on him a robe of silk, and hung a chain of gold about his neck. He bade him ascend into Pharaoh's own second chariot, while a

crier went before proclaiming that all must do homage to him, for henceforth he was to be the governor of the whole land of Egypt.

But what was the governorship over the land of Egypt compared with the dignity of being entrusted, not only with the care of Christ and His Ever-virgin Mother, but' of being solemnly proclaimed Patron of the universal Church. Under Joseph's care God wished to place all the members of Christ's mystic body, and for that reason, too, did He bestow on him a father's heart, vast in its capabilities of love, that all might be embraced in its watchful protection and tender affection.

The great service performed by the earlier Patriarch, because of which Pharaoh himself gave to him a new name, which in the Egyptian tongue signified, "Savior of the World," consisted in saving from death the inhabitants not merely of Egypt but also of the surrounding lands. And this he did by preserving for them the wheat of the years of abundance that it might keep them alive during the years of starvation.

Here in truth he became the most beautiful prototype of that later Joseph, who preserved from the hands of Herod the true Bread of life, which is Christ Jesus. Joseph of Egypt garnered away year by year the grain. harvested in the time of plenty, and so Joseph, Patron of all the Church's children, year by year guarded and preserved for us Him who in the years to come was to be our daily food in the Holy Eucharist:

I am the living bread which came down from heaven.

If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world. -
John 6:51,52

Although Jesus is the one true "Saviour of the world," yet Joseph, too, had part in the sublime work of the world's redemption. Saint Joseph, it has often been said, was the savior of the Saviour of mankind. On him did we depend for our Bread of life even far more than the world in the ancient days depended on the Egyptian Joseph for the purely material bread of the body. It was Joseph's virginity that made possible Mary's Virginal Motherhood. Great was the debt that Egypt owed to its preserver but far greater is the debt that every human being owes and ever must owe to Joseph.

But there are still other striking parallels. It was in sleep that the great mystery of the Incarnation was made known to Joseph and his own surpassing part in it, which was henceforth to dominate and determine his whole life. In the same way the Angel again came to him and bade him take the Child and His Mother and flee with them into Egypt. So, too, We are once more told, "an angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph in Egypt" ordering him back into the land of Israel. And when, on arriving there, new dangers confronted him, "being warned in sleep," he retired "into the quarters of Galilee. And coming he dwelled in a city called Nazareth."

Can we fail to see how intimately in all this he was prefigured by the Egyptian Joseph? A divinely sent,, prophetic dream also determined the whole life of this earlier Patriarch, precisely as in the case of Saint Joseph. His brethren in fact called him "the dreamer," and here was the great dream itself that seemed most to have aroused their jealousy:

He dreamed also another dream, which he told his brethren, saying: "I saw in a dream, as it were the sun, and the moon, and eleven stars worshipping me." - - *Genesis 37:9*

That dream was prophetic not merely of the future greatness of Joseph, the future ruler of Egypt, but it also can be most beautifully applied in the case of Saint Joseph himself, the Spouse of Mary and the virginal father of Christ.

To "worship," of course, does not in this connection imply any religious act, but the homage paid by a subject to a person in authority. To Joseph, Christ Himself, the eternal Sun of Justice, and Mary, the Mother of God. who reflected in tender beauty the dazzling brightness of that Sun, were to give their most complete obedience. Christ was "subject" to him, the Scripture plainly tells us. Mary, too, as his true wife, joyfully rendered her own loving obedience to Joseph as the head of the house. The submission of both to him, as the representative of the Eternal Father, could not be shown more perfectly than in the Angel's summons: "Arise and take the child and his mother." To Joseph - not to Jesus or to Mary - were the orders of Heaven issued. Though he was in truth the least of that Earthly Trinity, in grace and dignity inferior to both Christ and Mary, yet he was the first and greatest in authority. But for his own part he gives us the example of the most perfect of superiors, sacrificing his whole life in humble and unselfish devotion, to those whom God had given into his faithful charge.

Thus, then, did Sun and Moon bow in sweet obedience to Joseph, while the eleven stars, representing the tribes of Israel and through them the Faithful of God's Church, over which Joseph is placed as the Patron of this mystic Israel, unite in giving the most constant, universal and affectionate veneration to him. Here, then, we have in all truth "the sun, the moon, and eleven stars worshipping" Joseph, that is, yielding complete obedience to him as did Jesus and Mary, or giving loving veneration as does today the Universal Church, placed like Christ Himself beneath Saint Joseph's fostering care. What man was ever honored like to this!

But, for our own sake, the best still remains to be said. Why was the splendor and power of the Egyptian Pharaoh providentially conferred on the earlier Joseph? Was it riot that by using his position for the benefit of others and for the glory of God he might become, in a sense, as Pharaoh magnificently called him, the "savior of the world." He was not, like Christ, to save men from their sins, but merely from their material wants, yet he was to be a divinely ordained instrument for preserving the lives of his own brethren as well as of countless others in his day. When the famine at length broke out, and the people cried to Pharaoh for food, all that he said to them was: "Go to Joseph: and do all that he shall say to you."

Here surely there is a great lesson to be learned, for constantly the Church repeats to us the selfsame words: "Go to Joseph!"

Catholics well know they have at all times free access to God, and no one is ever placed as a hindrance between them and Him. The sacred Humanity of Christ Itself is not an obstacle to prevent their closest approach to the Triune God, but a help leading up to Him. So, in their own sweet way, Mary and Joseph have but one function, and that is to bring us to Christ, for we are Christ's and Christ is God's. Gently they lead us in our weakness up to Him or bear us in their encircling arms where we might else stumble and fall, or even fail entirely to attain our own eternal destiny. They do far more. They intercede for us, and where* our prayers are so weak, so feeble, and our lives so unworthy, they obtain What else might be denied us or certainly would be given in less fulness and abundance.

Christ cannot but be pleased if we love those whom He loves most dearly, and so in her turn Mary cannot but rejoice at the tender love we show to Joseph and the childlike trust

with which we go to him. So Christ Himself did not disdain to have recourse to him for help and for protection. Often, too, on his strong shoulders Mary leaned and found comfort at his loyal, manly breast, warm with boundless and untold affection. He was the stay and help she needed in her weariness and trials, patiently endured for her Divine Son and Saviour.

More did she owe to Joseph than words can ever tell. He was the guardian of her virginity, the preserver of her Child, the support and sure reliance of her earthly life, a guide along the way, a comfort in affliction, a new joy added to her happiness for time and for eternity, and above all the faithful confidant of the Divine secret that was safely laid up in his devoted heart.

Is it then hard to see why Mary must love those who love her loyal Spouse, and Why Christ Himself would have us imitate the confidence that He unfailingly reposed in him? Knowing Saint Joseph as we now can know him, how could we ever fully please either Jesus or Mary if we failed to show him in our turn something at least of that honor, love and confidence that they unceasingly bestowed on him? In the hands of Joseph, let us remember, is still the mystic key to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary that can open them for us at will.

Joseph of old might hold the keys to the granaries of Egypt, but our own Saint Joseph can open at will the golden granaries of Heaven. Who would not go to Joseph?

Considering the Egyptian Joseph as a type of our own Saint, a most pertinent question has been asked regarding those words coming from the lips of Pharaoh: "Go to Joseph!" Are we to view them as really meant by the Holy Ghost to apply to our own Saint Joseph? If that is true they necessarily

imply the promise to us that our prayers shall be heard with special favor when presented through him. "Go to Joseph/" spoken typically of Saint Joseph, must be understood with the additional, "and there you shall receive help."

Whatever deep meaning we give to these words, they certainly have the highest significance for us. That much at least we may say without doubt. The interpretation of the Fathers, the liturgical use which the Church makes of them, the exhortations from the See of Peter, all imply that this counsel and admonition: "Go to Joseph!" is not to be taken lightly. We cannot understand it in any other way than as a solemn assurance on the part of Holy Church, the Bride of Christ, that if we heed her voice, and in our needs and trials "go to Joseph," we cannot be disappointed. "Go to Joseph!" she repeats with loving insistence, until it has become a familiar refrain to every ear: "Go to Joseph; and do all that he shall say to you."

That last clause, too, we must not omit. To be like Christ, children of Joseph, is not enough, we must like Christ also be children obedient to him. The will of Joseph is no other than the will of God in our regard. But he in turn will help us to fulfill it perfectly, as he himself fulfilled it here below. For he was ever a man faithful and just.

But that our prayers may be heard we must naturally comply with the conditions of every prayer of petition. We should go to him with confidence and persistence, and what we ask must be pleasing to God. Should our favor not be granted then something better is doubtless in store for us. From the Chair of Peter itself we are exhorted with ardent words to cherish in our souls this trusting devotion to Saint Joseph. Addressing the universal Christian world, Pope Leo XIII solemnly proclaimed:

Our heart harbors yet another wish. We deem it most salutary that the Christian people, besides their veneration for the Ever-Blessed Virgin and Mother of God, honor also and invoke with unbounded confidence her most pure Spouse, Saint Joseph. We are greatly concerned that this devotion strike deep root in the life and habits of the Faithful.

Surely most needed by souls is that beautiful prayer we are taught to recite daily from childhood up:

Guardian of virgins, and holy father Joseph, to whose faithful custody Christ Jesus, Innocence itself, and Mary, Virgin of virgins, were committed; I pray and beseech thee, by these dear, pledges, Jesus and Mary, that, being preserved from all uncleanness, I may with spotless mind, pure heart and chaste body, ever serve Jesus and Mary most chastely all the days of my life.

It is a pious belief, says Saint Bernardine of Sienna, though certain proof cannot be given, that out of the greatness of His filial love Jesus bestowed upon His Foster-father also the privilege which He granted to Mary in her Assumption. It is accepted by Saints and learned men that when, upon the death of Jesus, "the graves opened and many bodies of saints that had slept arose," as the Scripture tells us, Joseph was doubtless among their number. And it is further believed by them that his body did not thereafter return again to dust, but that he now reigns, like Mary, glorious in body and soul, with Christ.

This, says no less an authority than the great Jesuit theologian Suarez, "is an opinion sufficiently accepted, according to which it becomes probable that Saint Joseph is reigning with Christ in glorified body and soul." (Opera Omnia, XIX, Q xxix, art. ii, 8.) So, then, with Saint Bernardine

we may gladly .and reasonably believe that "the Holy Family, united on earth by a community of suffering and the bonds of love, now in body and soul reigns glorified in Heaven. More honored than Joseph of Egypt is Joseph the spouse of Mary, surpassing, we may further believe, all other saints in grace and in beatitude.

Why We Love Saint Joseph

Devotion to Saint Joseph is preeminently a Scriptural devotion. Its first promoter is the Holy Ghost. The strongest impetus to its growth was given by the writings of the early Fathers and Doctors of the Church. The pages of Saint Augustine, Saint Chrysostom, Saint Ambrose glow with the praise of this great Saint. In the Middle Ages, Saint Bernard exalted his virtues. In more recent times, Saint Bernardine of Sienna, Gerson, Saint Francis de Sales and Saint Teresa are illustrious for their devotion to this Saint of Saints. These are but a few names out of the many to show that there was no time when the glories of Saint Joseph were ignored, although in the Divine Providence the highest honor was bestowed upon him in these later times when one hundred and fifty-three of the Fathers gathered at the Vatican Council petitioned that he be declared Patron of the Universal Church.

It was eminently fitting that this glorious dignity should be conferred upon him, and that he who had been the guardian of Christ and His Blessed Mother, should also be the Patron of that Church which Christ came to found. He who had nourished, protected and preserved the body of the Saviour was rightly selected as the Patron of His mystic body, consisting of all the Faithful. As the Head of the Holy House of Nazareth he deserved also to be set as guardian over that spiritual structure Christ would build upon the Rock of Peter. Unbounded, therefore, was the joy of all Christians when Pius IX solemnly proclaimed Saint Joseph Patron of the Universal Church. Leo XIII reaffirmed this patronage and added all his prestige to the promotion of the beautiful devotion to this great Saint, which so strongly appeals to

every Christian heart that truly loves Christ and His Virgin Mother.

There is no age, no sex, no rank, no class, no profession or walk of life whereof Saint Joseph is not the proper patron. Virgins can confidently call on him, for he was the guardian of Mary. Those joined in holy wedlock will do well to put themselves under his protection to whom was given supreme charge over the holiest of families. Children will sweetly fold their hands and seek his love and intercession, since they know he bore in his strong arms the sweet Christ Child. Youths and maidens all will find in him a fatherly protector and a wise counsellor who safely guided and tenderly cherished the maiden Mary and the youthful Christ. The rich and the great of this earth can look up to him as the noblest of a royal line, the princely scion of David, the man exalted in his sublime position above all dignities of earth and heaven, less only than the Virgin Mother of God herself in his intimate relationship to the Incarnate Word. But the poor and lowly and those who drain the cup of suffering can best understand this great but gentle Saint, with the hardened hands of toil, who in the sweat of his brow earned the daily bread for Jesus and for Mary. Doubtless, he too had tasted all the trials and the hardships of this life, with its dearth and unemployment, its weary search for labor, its wanderings among people of an alien tongue, its often penurious wage, its goading stings and harsh indignities from man's unkindness and the bitter bread of the poor. There are the pangs of the poorest of the poor, and it is not unlikely that Joseph felt them all.

It was Joseph who supported Mary when all the doors of Bethlehem were shut upon them, who turned into a home the foul and loathsome stable that took on brightness from the touch of Mary's fingers, and who made ready for the Infant Christ the one and only piece of rough-hewn, ancient ,

furniture, the manger of the beasts. It was he who gathered the clean straws and with loving hand placed them for a bedding in the crib. With pious realism, W. M. Letts has sketched the scene of adoration that now followed by first describing its modern parallel, as in many a church and on many a Christmas day it was to be repeated through the centuries to come:

For in the crib there kneels a little child,
Behind him in her ragged shawl his mother,
For all the ages that have passed one child
Still finds God in another.

And there's our Saviour lying in the hay,
Behind Him in her shawl His watchful Mother;
Two mothers with their sons, each knows the joys
And sorrows of the other.

The Father kneels away there by the door,
The hands he clasps in prayer are rough with labor;
The likes of Him that hunger and that toil
Once called Saint Joseph neighbor.

Saint Joseph is a saint that everyone must love. His own love for Mary and for Jesus, his tender care for them and their unbounded gratitude and sweet affection in return, make it impossible not to feel drawn to him, and with Mary and Jesus to entrust ourselves to his care and intercession. Love of Saint Joseph might almost, in our day, be called a test of the depth of true Catholicism. To think of the Holy Family and leave him out of our range would surely be a spiritual abnormality. Thus the Little Flower, writing of her pilgrimage to Rome, says in her loving and confident way:

I prayed especially to Saint Joseph to watch over me. From my childhood, devotion to him had been interwoven with my

love for our Blessed Lady. Every day I said the prayer beginning: "Guardian of virgins, and holy father Joseph" so I felt that I was well protected and quite safe from danger.

But there is another and most charming reference to him which shows her childlike familiarity with the Holy Family - and why indeed should we not all be perfectly at home in that holy house of Nazareth, with those three most dear and near to us: Jesus, Mary, Joseph! It was in the refectory, she says, that the sweetest aspirations of love often came to her. Sometimes she quite came to a standstill at the thought that Our Lord, if in her place, would have partaken of the very dishes there set before her. Then she adds, "Here are my little rubrics," and she thus sets forth her table program:

I imagine myself at Nazareth, in the house of the Holy Family. If, for instance, I am served with salad, cold fish, wine or anything pungent in taste, I offer it to Saint Joseph. To Our Blessed Lady I offer hot foods and ripe fruits, and to the Infant Jesus our feast-day fare, especially broth, rice and preserves.

Lastly, when I am served a wretched dinner I say cheerfully: "Today, my little one, it is all for you!"

That is Divine love at play. And there was much play and joy, too, in that Holy Family, and not all sorrow, trial and hardship. The gladdest hearts the world has ever known were in that home, for the simple reason that they were the holiest. Let us hold fast to that truth, and let no wrong asceticism ever drive it out of our mind. To be glad is our duty. Rejoice always, the Apostles tell us, but rejoice in the Lord,

Mary and Joseph profoundly adored the God who had made Himself their "Son," nor need we imagine that it was difficult

for them to blend the most perfect devotion the world has ever known with the sweetest family affection. We see how the Little Flower herself can make her playmate of the Christ Child, and even far more perfectly than she could Joseph and Mary both play with Him and adore Him. Then, too, God gave to them a special grace that went with this vocation. Coventry Patmore comes home to a great truth when he thus naively describes Saint Joseph's love for Mary and the love of Mary for Christ, all so human and all so Divine:

Say, did his sisters wonder what could Joseph see
In a mild, silent little maid like thee?
And was it awful, in that narrow house,
With God for Babe and Spouse?
Nay, like thy simple, female sort, each one
Apt to find Him in Husband and in Son,
Nothing to thee came strange in this
Thy wonder was but wondrous bliss. . . .
All mothers worship little feet,
And kiss the very ground they've trod;
But, oh, thy little Baby sweet
Who was indeed thy God!

We see here, too, how devotion to Saint Joseph is always connected with devotion to Mary and Jesus, and cannot but help constantly to promote this in our lives. Best known for her devotion to Saint Joseph is undoubtedly the Patron and spiritual Mother of the Little Flower, Saint Teresa of Avila. She herself tells us how Our Blessed Lady appeared to her with Joseph to reward her for her great devotion to him.

She seemed to perceive, Saint Teresa says, a white mantle cast about her, showing how she was cleansed from all sin, while Our Lady with both hands embraced her and expressed great pleasure at the affectionate devotion and love shown for her pure Spouse Saint Joseph. She then

recommended Saint Teresa to turn to him for all that might be best for the convent, with the assurance that, it would be granted her. Finally, Our Lady presented her with a precious stone as a pledge of what she had promised, while a rich necklace, with a golden cross, seemed to be placed about her neck. At the conclusion of this vision the soul of Saint Teresa was filled with a burning desire to live solely and alone for the service of God. Such sentiments, together with the peace which God gives, are the test, as Saint Ignatius says, by which we can always recognize the work of the good spirit within our souls and can certainly know that we are not being deceived or misled.

Saint Joseph is in a special way the Patron of souls who wish to make progress in the interior life, wherein he himself was a consummate master. This is true of all souls, no matter how far they may proceed in the spiritual or mystical life. A special evidence, if any evidence were needed, are the frequent Divine communications vouchsafed him. Four distinct occasions are mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures on which he was favored with angelic visitations. But we do not need these extraordinary signs of Heaven to appreciate how deeply versed in spiritual things he must have been who for almost thirty years of his life was in constant intercourse with the Mother of God and with God Himself in human form.

Wisely did Saint Teresa place under his special patronage all the Carmelite convents she founded. To a great number she gave his own name. Other religious Orders in the Church similarly sought to honor Saint Joseph.

Classical in the literature on our great Patriarch are Saint Teresa's famous words that have inspired increased confidence towards him in countless souls, ever since the day they first were written:

I took Saint Joseph for my patron and advocate, and I recommend myself unceasingly to his protection. I do not remember ever to have asked anything of him that I did not obtain.

It seems as though God gives to other saints the grace to assist us in some certain necessity; but according to my experience Saint Joseph assists us in every want, Our Lord wishing to make us understand that, as He was obedient to His Foster-father here upon earth, so He now can refuse him no request in Heaven. Many persons who have invoked him by my advice have experienced this truth, and the number of his clients increases daily and corroborates what I declare.

I would desire to persuade everyone to honor so great a Saint, so frequently have I been shown the powerful influence he possesses with God. I have never met anyone who had true devotion to him, who did not advance rapidly in the path of virtue, because he mightily aids all who recommend themselves to his intercession.

For several years past I have asked a special favor at his festival, and it has always been granted; or, if the request was not judicious, he has denied it for my greater good. I implore those who do not credit this to make the trial for themselves. Let him who has no guide in the way of prayer take this great Patriarch for his director, he will not go astray.

The Power of Saint Joseph

It surely was a daring promise made by the Little Flower, and yet not too daring to be wholly true, when she gave us the assurance that God would deny her nothing in Heaven for the simple reason that she had never refused Him anything on earth. What then can God deny to Saint Joseph who is above all saints the model of obedience to the Divine will?

The obedience of Saint Joseph is the great example of obedience proposed to us. It does not, of course, surpass the obedience of Christ and of Mary to Joseph himself. But it is an obedience of which the Scriptures give us the most minute details, with the clear purpose that we should model our own obedience upon it, that so we may become like to Christ.

The perfect copy of Christ was Mary, but the perfect copy of both was Joseph. Before his eyes he ever held their loving, breathing example. Never did he vary from this until his eyes were closed forever by the loving touch of the Divine Foster Son and a last fervent kiss was printed on his white forehead by the virgin lips of Mary, his own immaculate wife.

The path of his life had been one straight path of duty, such as we all have to tread, with thorns and flowers along the way. The thorns were many and long and sharp, but the flowers in turn were bright and sweet. So there is but one task for each and all of us, in which alone our happiness can be found, and that is to do most perfectly God's most loving Will. We accomplish this, through His grace, by the virtue of obedience, and our highest motive is Divine Love. In all this Joseph is our great example. Like him let us never fear and never hesitate, even for a moment's space, to do that most tender of all wills, the Divine Will.

Saint Joseph's obedience was most blind, unquestioning and sublime. Tried by Almighty God in many and various ways, it shone out like gold in the furnace. In time of doubt and hesitation he humbly deliberated with God in prayer. What could equal that first great trial in Mary's regard? Yet through it all the Scriptures can give him the sublime praise: he was a "just man." His resolution was formed with equal charity to Mary, forgetfulness of himself and complete compliance with the slightest implication of the Divine law. The "just man" must first be the obedient man.

The obedience of Saint Joseph is such, as has been well said, that it is the perfect echo of every Divine command. "Arise and take the child and his Mother, and fly into Egypt," is the order given by God through His angel messenger, and the echo comes back: "Who arose, and took the child and his mother by night and retired into Egypt." In Joseph's fulfillment there is even a phrase added that was not literally in the Divine order - "by night." That little phrase contains in itself a priceless wealth of meaning. It shows not merely Saint Joseph's obedience, but his prompt obedience. There is no moment's thought or delay. The order is clear and the fulfillment of it is both perfect and instant.

It is therefore this flight into Egypt which for all time will remain the example by which even saints can test the perfection of their obedience, comparing their own efforts with the qualities Saint Joseph displayed. To save the Son of the Infinite God from the hand of a weak human king, he was to take "the child and his mother and fly with them into Egypt." There is no previous notice, no time for preparation. The goal is a distant, benighted, pagan land. There were Jews settled in that country, it is true, but how could he find the way to them? The roads were surely unknown to Joseph, the language would be strange. He remembered how even his own people had closed their doors on him in Bethlehem.

And then, could not Almighty God have foreseen, or prevented, or at least have eased and simplified this terrible experience? There was no explanation and no direction given him - only: "Arise, and take the child and his mother, and fly into Egypt: and be there until I shall tell thee." He did not mind what might befall himself, but think of the Mother and Child! Yet without a word, without a question, he flees out into the night, and trusts to God. For this reason he was to succeed in all things, even where failure seemed most evident. His life was one great success in the eyes of God.

And then think how perfect must have been his obedience to every slightest inspiration of grace that he might be able for all the many years to give command, in meekness and humility, to Mary and to Christ. Through him the Eternal Father spoke, and through him Mary's invisible Spouse, the Holy Ghost, perfectly carried out His Divine designs. The soul of Joseph was ever alert, responsive to the least whispering of God, obedient in the slightest as in the greatest things. And so he who denied God nothing cannot now be denied by God in anything, nor will he ever ask what could be opposed to the Divine Will - that Will in whose fulfilment all our greatness and our happiness must forever consist.

If neither God the Father can refuse anything to him who held His place on earth, nor the Holy Spirit who, as Saint Augustine says, was the conjugal love in that union between Mary and Joseph, what can the Divine Son refuse him whom He beheld only under the sweet, compelling relationship of "father". For the paternity of Joseph, as the Fathers and Doctors and theologians of the Church so rightly insist, was true and real - all the more exalted because purely virginal.

Nor yet will the prayer of Joseph for us ascend alone to the Triune God and to his Foster-Son. To it will infallibly be added the mighty intercession of Mary. "Son, Thy father and I . . ." Those were the very words the Scripture records from her lips, and how can Christ refuse her now when with those selfsame words she joins her prayers with those of Joseph, saying at the right hand of the Saviour's Throne: "Son, Thy father and I request. . ."

Surely we are safe in Joseph's hands. True devotion to him, it has well been said, cannot but be a pledge of eternal salvation, because it always must imply the truest and tenderest devotion to Mary and to Christ, for whom alone he lived on earth, and with whom he is now inseparably united in the glory of Heaven: one heart, one soul, one mind with them. Affectionately, in his Hymn to Saint Joseph, Faber expressed the pious aspirations of the Faithful throughout the world when he wrote:

There are many saints above
Who love us with true love,
Many angels ever nigh;
But Joseph, none there be,
O, none who love like thee!
Dearest of Saints, be near us when we die!

Thou wert guardian of Our Lord,
Foster-father of the Word,
Who in thine arms did lie;
If we His brothers be,
We are foster-sons to thee.
Dearest of Saints, be near us when we die!

Thou wert Mary's earthly guide,
Forever at her side,
O, for her sake, hear our cry;

For we follow in thy way,
Loving Mary as we may,
Dearest of Saints, be near us when we die!

Thou to Mary's virgin love
Wert the image of the Dove,
Who was her Spouse on high;
Bring us gifts from Him, dear Saint,
Bring us comfort when we faint,
Dearest of Saints, be near us when we die!

Thou wert a shadow thrown
From the Father's summit lone,
Over Mary's life to lie;
O, be thy shadow cast
O'er our present and our past,
Dearest of Saints, be near us when we die!

Sadly o'er the desert sand,
Into Egypt's darksome land,
As an exile didst thou fly;
And we are exiles, too,
With a world to travel through,'
Dearest of Saints, be near us when we die!

When thy gentle years were run,
On the bosom of thy Son,
Like an infant didst thou lie;
O, by thy happy death,
In that tranquil Nazareth,
Dearest of Saints, be near us when we die!

Devotion to Saint Joseph is most fittingly connected with our prayer and preparation for a happy death, the crown of a Christian life. The death of Joseph in the arms of Jesus and Mary has inspired Christian art with some of its noblest

conceptions as it has aided millions of Christians by their confidence in our great Saint, to perfect themselves in those two supreme arts, the art of living well and of dying well.

To the special friends of Saint Joseph every Wednesday of their lives is a red-letter day. With each revolving week the return of that day, dedicated to Saint Joseph, brings renewed confidence and joy. Their hearts go out to him in affectionate devotion and . love that find expression, if not always in lengthy prayers, yet, at least in the filial uplifting of their thoughts to him. In the same way, too, the Month of Joseph is dear to them like the Month of Mary, and the Christmas season, or the Month of the Sacred Heart, and there are countless ways in which they can manifest the warmth of their childlike trust in him.

Some there are who wear the Cincture of Saint Joseph, some who practice the Church's beautiful and indulgenced devotion to the seven sorrows and the seven joys of his life. But all, whether they do much or little, know that their devotion to Joseph is devotion to Mary and to Christ, and evermore leads up to this. It is not confined to any day or month, but runs through all their lives, in constant union with devotion to Jesus and Mary. Perfectly and fervently this threefold affection of every Catholic heart is summed up in that indulgenced aspiration which the Church places upon the lips of all her children:

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul;
Jesus, Mary, Joseph, assist me at the hour of my death;
Jesus, Mary, Joseph, may I die in your sweet embrace!

About This EBook

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The cover image is a detail of a stained glass window of Saint Joseph and the Christ Child, date and artist unknown. It is in the church of Saint Antony in Saint Ulrich in Gröden, Val Gardena, Italy, was photographed on 30 December 2012 by Wolfgang Moroder, and swiped from [Wikimedia Commons](#).

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